IMPOSTOR

A Poetry Journal

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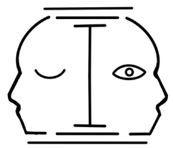

Impostor: A Poetry Journal
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Impostor syndrome: the belief that talents and accomplishments are fraudulent or the result of luck.

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From the Editors

Pareidolia: the tendency for perception of a visual stimulus as an object, pattern or meaning known to the observer. Common examples are perceived images of animals, faces, or objects in cloud formations, or lunar pareidolia like the Man in the Moon or the Moon Rabbit. Enjoy the work of these 11 creators in our second issue!

—L.M. and Coral

Our Mission

Impostor syndrome: the belief that talents and accomplishments are fraudulent or the result of luck.

Perhaps you've experienced it yourself—the editors certainly have. The literary world is rife with lofty and exclusionary definitions of what qualifies the title of "writer." When we decided to create this journal, we knew that first and foremost, we wanted to create a welcoming and encouraging space for writers who may feel intimidated by the established literary world or who feel as if their credentials—or lack thereof—don't fall in line with what's expected. We want you to submit regardless of your history. Age, academic background, or the length of your curriculum vitae hold no influence on our view of what constitutes a poet. Visit our website for more information on how to submit your work. Your voice matters, and we want to hear it.

Photograph by V.L. Ondra

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What We Fear in the Dark
by Rebekah Comer

When the lights go out
children scream, naturally.
It's an instinct, I think.
Something inherent then reinforced,

A fear of the darkness
develops while we're young.
Spin in a circle thirteen times
in front of a mirror and say

Her name: *Bloody Mary! Bloody Mary!*
we chanted as children. In the pitch
we'd flick the lights, peer above the sink
where a face is reflected, crying red tears—

Perhaps it was our own
we saw drenched in imagined blood,
but to us at the time, it was her, certainly,
the Nocturnal Woman behind the glass.

In the drip of the sink was
the drip of her blood and
the drip of our tears when her face
appeared, an apparition in our dreams.

A poltergeist in the morning murk,
the assumed mother to any motherless
sound, birthing the noises in our minds
and abandoning them for us to rear.

And we do. We coddle them, hold them
near; give them names to make ourselves
less afraid: the racoon scavenger in the bin, a breeze
rustling the holly bush, Frankie the apartment ghost.

Before we enter a room, we reach our hand in first
sliding up and down the wall, fumbling for a switch
or a button, a knob, a dimmer slide, something
to reveal what hides beyond the threshold.

Reluctantly, we slip our arm in further
above the wrist, past the elbow through the frame
until we find it and assure ourselves that nothing's there.
Never was. Of course. We knew it all along.

But still, like children, when the power goes out,
or someone leans against a lightswitch, or a bulb busts,
pops and smokes, tension rises in our necks at the darkness
uncontrolled. *What is it? What's happening?*
When will our power return?

Hunting Zed
by Myles Gann

The blinking green on the clock face
meant
it's go time.

The shooting jet through arcing sky
meant
to aim for out-of-the-blue.

The Y-shaped birch sapling in the mud
meant
you're hunting Zed.

The calm sunrays inching across layers of dust
meant
potential energy accrues interest.

The way you smiled and tilted your freckled cheek
meant
forecast calls for an end to the drought.

The speed to deliver ahead of schedule
meant
hire me or lose.

The reflection in my sleepy mirror smiles
means
I can make it just a bit further.

all faces are accidents
by William Jamieson

all faces are accidents;
accidents have faces.
the spilled milk has eyes,
the spilled ink has eyes,
the paint spatters in the sink
are a nose, a mouth, a hairline.

I saw Charlemagne in the dirt on the floor
I saw Mark Twain swirl in the stream
I saw Hank in the bottom of a glass
I saw the face of the girl I
loved when I was fifteen, hundreds of times
that year;
her face where her face belonged,
above her neck; floating as we
walked together,
but never near enough to touch.

I cannot see her face
with my eyes closed
anymore.

some things are lost to me
even when I've put them
in my pocket,
the faces of dear ones.

three lines on the paper
a smear of gesso on the canvas

suggest the faces,
the accidental faces,
the faces I search for
to fill holes in my memory.

all faces are accidents
of time and circumstance
all accidents have faces
caught,
then lost to chance.

Photograph by Andrew Shumway

Déjà vu
by Jasmina Kuenzli

I know you
look for me late at night
when no one else is watching.

Not enough for the dawn.
Not enough to write my name
with flames trailing the end of it.

I still think about you
in the daylight,
with the sun streaming through my car windows
and my feet propped up in the backseat
in the rose blossoms and the bloom of spring.

In my dreams,
I'm looking right at you
and I still can't see your face.

The Shape of Creation
by Tim Lutton

The shape of creation
was not made for you.

It is from the silent mouth in white,
curt and passive, barely parting
with unknowable anger,
that blows the easterly wind.

Eyes of soft fluorescence
glow with strange love
as the streetlights that flood and fill
the walls of night.

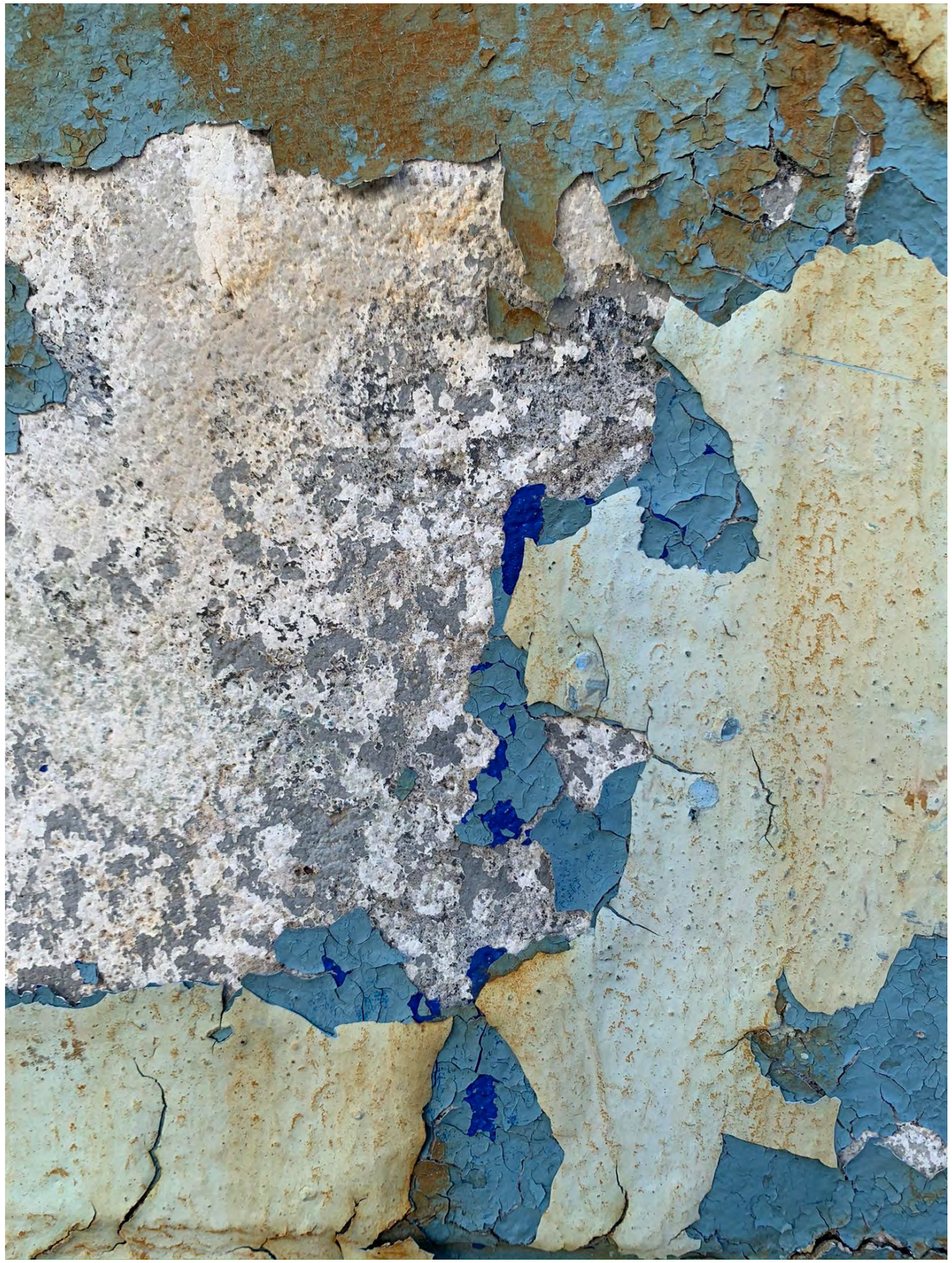
My reality cannot understand
the contours and spirals of your own.

The bridge of your body,
that land of space above
where you sit and divide
your kingdom.

Under you
black fathoms of writhing seas,
drown and drain
my old geographies,
my pathetic memories
into the unreal.

Others cannot see
they drift behind muted glass, passing
through screens of the white sun.

I am a curiosity.
Every fissure of my vision
ripped apart in your revelation.
I am still following
a path that is broken.



Photograph by Andrew Shumway

En Attendant
by James McNaney

Samuel Beckett. A forest somewhere in France, 1941

Moonlight, when it passes through enough trees,
is no longer milky—is barely light at all;
it is then a suggestion of illumination.
When you can't see, things become suggestions, commands
imploring you to action and response -
to jump when the twigs behind you break, to hold fast
when you lose track of time and you can no longer
see your cheap watch's face.
And to listen
for voices; Irish, French, German.

In this gathered dark your legs are shadows.
You are a broken glass of a man,
surviving on bread and milk and whatever paper
you can find. You are at your most and least alive
during these nights *en attendant*. You are alive because
you are in barely suspended physical danger, but you are
practically snug in the grave as you watch time pass,
as your nameless man does not come, and as squirrels contrive
with sticks to mimic the sound of a pistol priming.

You pull on threads in your sweater and feel your toes
grow numb. You spend long hours considering, in fact,
silently *calculating* the loudness of urine on leaves.
Maybe tonight there is a wind through the forest,

maybe the pine needles are moving past your feeling-less
feet. Maybe you are left with a fading anticipation,
a sense of duty hiding under tense muscles,
and deepening wrinkles. All within a slender frame hidden
between the shadows, the moonlight, and the trees.

Photograph by Andrew Shumway

Popinjay
by Hannah Morris-Voth

The popinjay, with flowers in his beak,
drops them everywhere. Strewn
lilac and lilies, the bringer of the
cherry blossom season—and then –

Wilting in the winter, limping along.
Someone has crushed this pink rose
into a million pieces—someone's hand
was too strong, was wielded indelicately.

The popinjay, with flowers in his beak,
drops from the sky. Little love, little bird,
gone now, holding black roses in his beak.
He's covered over by autumn's gold leaves.

i park my marrow in the garage
by A.K. Shakour

meet me at my friend's bar
the perky gray bubble reads
sure, but what if people see?
i wonder, but he sends the laugh emoji.
no, dummy, that's what it's called.

i park my marrow in the garage,
it's tender, unlocked and vulnerable
on the corner near spence cafe,
i shove a quarter in the slot
as you wait at the outdoor table
with two tequila shots & two beers ready.

my smile is a lime rind but here's the salt—
when you hold my hand, the september air
is electric. i forget that i am a secret
until your old schoolmate spots us &
your fingers uncoil from mine,
i flush stop-sign red, the guilt constricts
my throat. i push the fried pickles away
unable to eat the forbidden fruit.
i know i should go no further
but you hold out a blunt
wanna go out by the car and smoke?

all i can do is nod and follow you
behind the cajun red equinox
hidden in the overgrown bushes
you snake your hand behind my neck
to slide in for a clandestine kiss.

Photograph by Andrew Shumway

Perception
by Danny Walker

1 a.m.

Laying down after hours of emotional fluctuation
The closet door was removed when we moved in
To create a walk-in

I open my eyes before bed
To see it happen
And lay in it

The spider

That emerged from the hinge
Transformed, climbed around the door
And came back to nest and mock me

Or used to
It's a very silly concept to sit on
And compare to other creatures
Like just imagine
A screw on a table turning into a ladybug
How quaint

Contributors

Rebekah Comer is a teacher and writer from the Mississippi Gulf Coast. She earned her Bachelor's in Secondary English Education from Mississippi State University in 2019. When Rebekah is not trying to convince 12-year-olds that books are cool, she can be found thrifting, completing puzzles, making TikToks, and watching re-runs of *The Bachelorette*. Find her on Twitter and Instagram @rebacomer.

Myles Gann is a standard-ole midwest America story. Having grown up in Ohio, he sang and danced his way out west (*La La Land* style) to sit in a dark room and write all day. He has an unhealthy obsession with superheroes and warns everyone around him that he's known to write fiction stories at the drop of a hat. He also creates semi-quality content for his own website called myggaming.com, and can be gently stalked on Twitter @ComicsSimple.

William Jamieson (he/him/his) writes, paints, and creates music in a basement a few miles west of Baltimore, Maryland. He occasionally comes out to breathe fresh air and cook meals. He can be found on Instagram @another_lousy_tourist.

Jasmina Kuenzli is an author of poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction and has been published with *Capsule Stories*, *Pidgeonholes*, *The Mark Literary Review*, and many others. When she isn't writing, Jasmina can be found weightlifting, running, and holding impromptu dance parties in her car. Her life goals include landing a back flip, getting legally adopted by Dwayne "The

Rock" Johnson, and being a contributor on Drunk History. She would like to thank Brenna and Sarah, who hear all these stories first, and Harry Styles, who is sunshine distilled in a human being.

Tim Lutton is a young English graduate living in London who enjoys the arts, photography, music and cats, trying to make sense of anxiety and imagining a better world. He has never been published. He can be found on Instagram @mr.timnus and Twitter @amanoutoftim.

James McNaney is a writer from Belfast, Northern Ireland. He writes poetry, prose and non-fiction. You can find more of his work at his blog paper-sail.blog and follow his twitter @JamesMcNaney1.

Hannah Morris-Voth has been a guest editor for the Inlandia Institute, is presently an editor with *The Aster Review*, and a writer for *Chasing Shadows Magazine*. Her poetry is soon to appear in *Voices*, *Juniper Literary Magazine*, and *Honey Fire Literary Magazine*. She is currently working on her first poetry pamphlet.

V.L. Ondra is an artist and metalsmith living in Pittsburgh with their cat, Syrup. You can find their work on Instagram @eyeslikethieves.

A.K. Shakour has a bachelor's degree from The University of British Columbia in English literature, with a minor in creative writing. She has work published in *Room Magazine*, *yolk literary*, and others. She has one dog and a plethora of potted plants that desperately need to be watered.

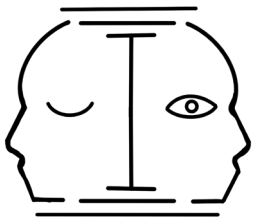
When asked about his artistic process, **Andrew Shumway** said "Mmm, textures," and refused further comment. He lives in Philadelphia with two cats and many houseplants. You can find him on Instagram @contemporaryslob.

Danny Walker is a poet, a cat lover, and a person who holds and develops empathy for most everyone they meet. Poetry has been a love and hobby of theirs since they were 16. They've studied many poets on how to utilize Form Poetry to have not only the poem itself convey meaning, but the structure as well. They can be found on Twitter at @dwwlit.

Editors

L.M. Camiolo is a writer and editor originally from New York and currently based in Philadelphia. She is a former poetry editor for *Toho Journal* and her work has appeared in *antonym*, *FEED*, *Doghouse*, and elsewhere. She is editor of *DARK ENTRIES*, a journal for dark speculative poetry. She also co-hosts a podcast, Let's Talk About Snacks. You can find her on Instagram @shoresofpluto.

Hailing from rural Western New York, **Coral O'Leary** is a lake-effect snow ex-pat, current New Yorker, queer poet, cultural worker, and asexual aromantic-spectrum lesbian. Her Pushcart Prize-nominated work has appeared in *Minnow Literary Magazine*, *Baby Teeth Journal*, *SORTES*, and other publications. She is currently working on her first chapbook. Coral can be found on Instagram @ohcoralpoetry.



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